IN MEMORIAM

NORMAN A. REASONER

On December 29, 1957, a tragic loss was suffered by the entire world of Horticulture and Hibiscus in particular, by the death of Norman A. Reasoner.

Mr. Reasoner was President of our Society through the formative period of our first two years and it was certainly through the contribution of his advice, efforts and substance that our Society has survived and become the organization that it is today.

Through his avid collection and unselfish dissemination of new varieties, he was probably responsible for more genuine interest in our flower than any one person. His father and uncle before him were the founders of the oldest tropical nursery in Florida. His interest in the world of plants was, therefore, part of his entire life. Hibiscus, however, was his first and continuing interest.

His passing will be mourned by all who knew him personally and by many who only knew of his work. A true plantsman and a kind and understanding person is gone. His memory will always be with us.

HISTORICAL NOTES ON HIBISCUS

- GAST

Hawaii, where hibiscus finds its happiest home, probably received its first Rosa-Sinensis shortly after the first whites arrived. Hawaiian ports were provisioning places for vessels in the fur trade between China and the Northwest Coast of America which flourished around 1800. About the same time, a demand for the native sandalwood of Hawaii developed in China and there was a brisk exchange of trade between Asia and Hawaii. Chinese settlers came to Hawaii early too and they most generally brought plants with them. So, while we have no printed evidence that Rosa-Sinensis was in Hawaii prior to 1850, it probably came over much earlier. During the latter part of the Nineteenth Century, varieties from all over the world were brought in by collectors, so that when interest in hybridizing developed around the turn of the century, Hawaii had practically all varieties available, to use in their crosses.

It is apparent that in other areas of Polynesia, the Rosa-Sinensis arrived before the white man; of its place in the South Seas, Dr. E. D. Merrill says that it was "a Pre-Magellan, man introduced, ornamental species from the islands to the West" meaning of course, the East Indies. The red hibiscus is mentioned frequently in native folklore and inasmuch as the origin of the Polynesian peoples is said to have been in Southern Asia, it is possible that hibiscus followed them in their migration.

So far as I have been able to determine, the first printed mention of the species which Linnaeus named Rosa-Sinensis, appears in Von Rheede's "Hortus Malabarensis", pub-